

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A lithographic apparatus comprising:
~~an illumination system to provide a beam of radiation;~~
a support structure to support a patterning structure, the patterning structure serving to impart ~~a~~ the beam of radiation with a pattern in its cross-section;
a substrate table ~~configured to hold~~ for holding a substrate;
a projection system to project the patterned beam of radiation onto a target portion of the substrate;
a dust-tight storage container defining a non-vacuum storage space to contain at least one patterning structure, wherein the storage container is arranged to be coupled with a transfer container to exchange said at least one patterning structure through a closeable passage between the transfer container and the storage container, the passage closeable using a shutter of the storage container; and
a vacuum chamber to receive said at least one patterning structure via or from the storage container.
2. (Original) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transfer container is particle-tight.
3. (Original) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the lithographic apparatus further comprises a vacuum pump to evacuate gas from the vacuum chamber.
4. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the lithographic apparatus further comprises a further vacuum chamber in fluid communication with the vacuum chamber via a passage which is vacuum closeable and a transfer mechanism to transfer said at least one patterning structure through the passage.

5. (Currently Amended) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the storage container is constructed and arranged to be coupled with the transfer container such that a part of a ~~first~~ shutter of the storage container and a part of a ~~second~~ the shutter of the transfer container are coupled in order to be moved simultaneously into said storage space.
6. (Currently Amended) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 5, wherein ~~at least one of the first and second shutters~~ the shutter of the storage container, the shutter of the transfer container, or both, is arranged to support the patterning structure.
7. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 5, wherein in use, while moving the patterning structure into the storage space, respective inner parts of the respective shutters move into the storage space together with the patterning structure.
8. (Original) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the lithographic apparatus further comprises a holder to hold the patterning structure when moved inside the storage space.
9. (Original) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the lithographic apparatus further comprises slideable walls forming walls of the vacuum chamber.
10. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a device comprising:
connecting a substantially dust-tight, non-vacuum-compatible transfer container in a dust-tight transfer position against an outer portion of a lithographic apparatus;
transferring a patterning structure from the transfer container into a substantially dust-tight non-vacuum storage space of the lithographic apparatus through an opening closeable by a moveable part of the outer portion of the lithographic apparatus;
transferring the patterning structure from the storage space into a vacuum chamber;
illuminating the transferred patterned structure with a beam of radiation to form a patterned beam of radiation; and
projecting the patterned beam of radiation onto a target portion of a substrate.

11. (Original) A device manufacturing method according to claim 10, further comprising:

pumping the vacuum chamber to produce a substantially vacuum ambience;
transferring the patterning structure from the vacuum chamber into a further vacuum chamber in a substantially vacuum state, wherein the patterning structure is placed into an illumination position in the further vacuum chamber for forming the patterned beam.

12. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said vacuum chamber is arranged inside the non-vacuum storage space of the dust-tight storage container.

13. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method according to claim 10, further comprising forming said vacuum chamber inside the dust-tight non-vacuum storage space of the storage container.

14. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising slideable wall portions arranged within said dust-tight storage container, said slideable wall portions enclosing at least part of said vacuum chamber.

15. (Currently Amended) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said slideable wall portions are configured to abut a portion of a passage that connects said vacuum chamber to a further vacuum chamber.

16. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said slideable wall portions are separate from wall portions that define said dust-tight storage container.

17. (Previously Presented) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a transfer device, said transfer device including a wall portion enclosing at least part of said vacuum chamber.

18. (New) A device manufacturing method according to claim 10, further comprising moving simultaneously into said storage space a part of a shutter of the storage container and a part of the shutter of the transfer container.

19. (New) A lithographic apparatus, comprising:
a support structure to support a patterning structure, the patterning structure serving to impart the beam of radiation with a pattern in its cross-section;
a substrate table configured to hold a substrate;
a projection system to project a patterned beam of radiation onto a target portion of the substrate;

a dust-tight storage container defining a non-vacuum storage space to contain at least one patterning structure, wherein the storage container is arranged to be coupled with a transfer container to exchange said at least one patterning structure through a closeable passage between the transfer container and the storage container; and

a vacuum chamber, arranged inside the non-vacuum storage space of the dust-tight storage container, to receive said at least one patterning structure via or from the storage container.

20. (New) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising a slideable wall arranged within said dust-tight storage container, said slideable wall enclosing at least part of said vacuum chamber.

21. (New) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said slideable wall is configured to abut a portion of a passage that connects said vacuum chamber to a further vacuum chamber.

22. (New) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising a transfer device, said transfer device including a wall enclosing at least part of said vacuum chamber.

23. (New) A lithographic apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the storage container is constructed and arranged to be coupled with the transfer container such that a

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part of a first shutter of the storage container and a part of a second shutter of the transfer container are coupled in order to be moved simultaneously into said storage space.